



Well-prepared teachers are the most valuable resource a community can provide its young people. Aside from family support, a good teacher is the most important determinant of a child's success in school – more important than class size or school facility. Governor Warner's goal is to attract and retain the best teachers for our students.

Governor Warner's Teacher Retention initiative will offer a number of measurable and accountable ways to help ensure that every student receives effective instruction from a quality teacher.

Virginia faces teacher shortages – in most school systems and in a variety of subjects. In particular, we have a shortage of teachers in math, science, special education, and foreign languages. The teacher shortage is further compounded for some schools – in inner cities, rural areas, and high crime areas – that are often deemed less attractive places to work.

Adding to the shortages is the looming issue of teacher retirements. Nationally, we are heading into a period of high numbers of retirees in all areas of public service. Over the next ten years, more than 33,000 teachers will be eligible for retirement in Virginia – over 38% of the teaching workforce. Unless we can encourage an increasing number of new teachers into the field *and retain them*, the teacher shortage will grow.

Teacher salaries are certainly a part of the equation. While we cannot raise teacher salaries to the national average during a state fiscal crisis, we can help to improve other conditions for teachers. We can improve the environment for new teachers through

mentoring programs, increase the numbers of qualified teachers in the key area of middle school math through a Virginia Middle School Teacher Corps, and by deploying turnaround specialists to consistently low-performing schools we will improve the teaching environment for teachers – leading to improved student performance.

Effective Teacher Mentoring

Unquestionably, we need to do more to attract high quality teachers. While recruiting good candidates to become teachers is an important issue, *retaining* good teachers once they enter the field is equally important. Nationwide, about one-third of new teachers leave the profession within the first three years of teaching, and about 50 percent leave within the first five years. Inner cities and rural areas have unique problems in attracting and retaining teachers, and in some areas, the turnover rate is even higher. High turnover rates mean extra resources must be spent each year on training and re-training.

(continued on the reverse)

Education for a Lifetime

Providing support to beginning teachers is cost-effective. Beginning teachers who participated in a quality, structured mentoring program in California had a nine percent attrition rate over five years, compared to a 37 percent attrition rate for those who did not participate. The cost of replacing a teacher is estimated at 30 percent of salary and benefits. A high quality mentoring program is much less expensive.

- ✦ Governor Warner has proposed using funds from a U.S. Department of Education Teacher Quality Grant to sponsor “The Great Virginia Teach-In” – a job fair for teachers. The Commonwealth will also develop a state-of-the-art job bank and electronic hiring hall to allow teachers to post their resumes and school divisions to search for good candidates.

- ✦ This initiative will fund mentoring programs for new teachers in hard-to-staff schools during their first year in the classroom (1) to encourage them to remain in the teaching profession and in the locality where they are teaching, and (2) to help them get beyond initial stumbling blocks that may impede teaching and learning.

- ✦ These mentoring programs will be more than a “buddy system” for beginning teachers. The new programs will meet criteria based on nationally-recognized models that have proven effective in helping beginning teachers. Information about effective mentoring programs will be provided to all schools. School divisions will receive funds specifically to provide support for beginning teachers in hard-to-staff schools.

- ✦ Participating school divisions will be required to show, through annual reporting, that their mentoring programs for beginning teachers have proven successful in improving teacher retention.

Virginia Middle School Teacher Corps

Education reform initiatives often overlook the middle grades, even though these grades are the link between childhood and adolescence. The Virginia Middle School Teacher Corps addresses the need to reinforce the quality of math instruction in middle schools and will help ensure that students in the middle grades receive a solid foundation in math as they prepare to enter high school. The Teacher Corps will also provide support for middle schools that are likely to have difficulty increasing their numbers of highly qualified math teachers to comply with the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*.

- ✦ The Virginia Middle School Teacher Corps will provide the structure and incentives to place up to 70 experienced math teachers per year in middle schools that have been designated as “at risk in math.” The assignment will be for a three-year period in the school.

- ✦ Teachers selected as members of the Teacher Corps will be dynamic teachers who have demonstrated success in teaching math in challenging environments. While their top priority will be teaching, they may also work with school administrators and faculty to help less experienced or struggling teachers.

- ✦ Teachers selected for the program will receive training to prepare them for their new and challenging environment. They will also receive incentives to join and stay in the Teacher Corps, including improved retirement benefits.

Education for a Lifetime

“Turnaround Specialists”

Principals are the most important person in setting the tone for the school building. If the principal is not performing in a consistently low-performing school, he should be replaced. We need to identify people who have good skills and experience, give them added “turn-around specialist” training, and send them into challenged schools. The “turnaround specialist” principal should have a proven record of overcoming adversity in schools, and the training, support and authority required to initiate and lead the changes necessary to restore a successful learning environment to the school.

✦ This program includes a training program for up to 10 licensed school administrators in the first year and an additional 10 in the following year, who have demonstrated experience in improving consistently low-performing schools or organizations. The training will result in a “Turnaround Specialist” credential. The Turnaround Specialist will serve as the principal of a low-performing school for a minimum of three years.

✦ Training will focus on successful business and education strategies that have proven effective in “turning around” low-performing organizations. It will use proven business management strategies as they apply to schools, such as effective organizational management, finance and accounting practices, restructuring and renewal of troubled organizations, turnaround and crisis management, and business and education law.

✦ The Turnaround Specialists will operate under a contract with the local school system, defining their responsibilities, goals, and measures of success. They may also negotiate to have additional authority beyond that of a regular school principal. In addition to the

benefit of the intensive training, Turnaround Specialists will be eligible for additional incentives provided both by the state and the school division in which they serve. One specific enticement would be additional retirement benefits or deferred compensation.

✦ Schools may be eligible to receive a Turnaround Specialist (1) by expressing an interest in the services, (2) as a potential requirement resulting from consistent failure to meet state and federal education accountability measures, or (3) as a result of significant parental requests meeting specific guidelines as established by the State Board of Education.

#